

Research Methods and Ethics

ANTH 3500 (3 credits)

Mexico: Migration, Borders, and Transnational Communities

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Description

The *Research Methods and Ethics* course (RME) introduces students to the conceptual and practical tools for gathering primary data and the knowledge and skills that are essential to forming constructive relationships with organizations and/or individuals, which are necessary for completing an academic project in the cultural context of Mexico. In particular, the course enhances students' skills at building rapport; initiating purposeful dialogue in the cultural context of Mexico; gathering, recording, and analyzing primary data; and writing a scholarly academic report. The course also pays particular attention to US higher education ethical considerations that guide primary data collection and how these could be translated within the local cultural context of Mexico and Migration | Identity | Resilience. Broadly, the course introduces students to both qualitative and quantitative approaches of social science field research.

The main emphasis of the course is on the development of empirical tools and ethics of interactive research skills involving the collection of primary data. The course includes lectures on qualitative methods of research in social sciences and in particular in Migration | Identity | Resilience, development of a research proposal or internship proposal, and preparation of an application for review of research with human subjects. All students will participate in an overview of research design and methodological approaches to program themes. Ethical considerations related to conducting research or completing an internship will be discussed. The overall aim is to help students hone their experience-based learning processes and prepare them for the development of an Independent Study Project (ISP), which is largely based on the data gathered from primary sources, or an internship at a local organization.

Learning Outcomes

The Research Methods and Ethics course comprises 45 hours. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Show an acute sense of positionality and perspective and operate independently, using cultural sensitivity, language skills, and local networks of trust built over the course of the semester;
- Demonstrate awareness of appropriate methods and ethics used in field research in the critical global issue of Migration | Identity | Resilience OR demonstrate awareness of the ethics of internship in the context of Mexico;

- Analyze and process primary data gathered in the field and draw valid and ethical interpretations and conclusions;
- Produce an Independent Study Project proposal that is in strict observance of ethical academic standards and local values and that includes a research question, sample review of the relevant literature, outline of the research methods, and anticipated ethical challenges and ways of addressing them OR an internship proposal that includes a description of the host organization, an outline of tasks that will be performed, a proposed work timetable, and projected outcomes such as a paper or business plan.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English and Spanish and students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content through in-country expert lectures and field visits to a wide range of venues and regional locales.

Instructional Methods

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of *a concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation* embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

Course Schedule

**Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.*

Module 1: Experiential Learning and Positionality in Field-Based Research

This introductory module is designed to introduce students to field-based research in a study abroad context. Students learn how to relate to local communities and individuals. Most particularly, this module allows students to discover the power of experiential learning and use it as a tool to connect to local communities and individuals and develop into reflexive researchers who are attentive to their own positionality in relation to the local communities in which they engage for their research or internship.

Required Readings:

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed.

Phillips, R., & Johns, J. (2012). *Fieldwork for Human Geography*. London: SAGE.

Sessions:

Cultural Adjustment Cycle
Homestay as a Cultural Experience and Site of Learning
Doing Field-Based Research in a Study Abroad Context
Experiential Learning Philosophy and the Politics of Culture in Mexico
Positionality and Outsider/Insider Research
Skills for Networking, Time Management, and Productivity

Module 2: Research Methods and Ethics in Mexico

This module focuses on the tools and methods required for conducting quantitative and/or qualitative field research in observance of the ethics and value systems of the local community.

Required Readings:

Stephen, L. (2007). *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon*. Durham: Duke University Press.

- Chapter 1: Approaches to Transborder Lives

Mahar, C. (2011). *Reinventing Practice in a Disenchanted World: Bourdieu and Urban Poverty in Oaxaca, Mexico*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.

- Chapter 1: Colonia Life in Oaxaca
- Chapter 2: Creating the Object of Study
- Chapter 3: Consuelo's Story
- Chapter 4: Place and Identity

Sessions:

Research Methods and Ethics in Migration | Identity | Resilience
Selecting Topics, Formulating Research Questions, and Literature Review
Data Collection: Participant Observation and Interviewing
Mixed Methods Research
Data Analysis, Evaluation, and Interpretation

Module 3: Introduction to the ISP and Internship

This module will describe the ISP and internship processes and help students brainstorm ideas and set goals for their ISP or internship. The module will include a review and critique of past ISP and/or internship papers. The module will also walk the students through the Local Review Board (LRB) and Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and the application for Human Subjects Review (HSR application).

Required Readings:

Bryan, J., & Wood, D. (2015). *Weaponizing Maps: Indigenous Peoples and Counterinsurgency in the Americas*. New York: Guildford.

- Chapter 1: In the Rincón of the Sierra Juarez
- Chapter 8: The AGS, the Bowman Expeditions, and the Mexico Indígena Project

Sessions:

Critical Review of past ISPs or Internships
Introduction to the LRB/IRB Process and HSR Application
Identifying an ISP Advisor and Securing an Internship Placement
Meetings with the Academic Director to Discuss Preliminary ISP or Internship Ideas

Module 4: Project Proposal Development

Based on learning and engagement in the preceding course modules, this module focuses on ISP and internship proposal development and guiding students through the development of the Human Subjects Review (HSR) application for review by the Local Review Board (LRB). This critical phase in the course involves both large student group meetings and individual student meetings with the academic director and the ISP advisor or internship supervisor.

Required Readings:

Stephen, L. (2005). *Zapotec Women: Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in Globalized Oaxaca*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Chapter 1: Ethnicity and Class in the Changing Lives of Zapotec Women
- Chapter 2: Kinship, Gender, and Economic Globalization
- Chapter 3: Six Women's Stories: *Julia, Cristina, Angela, Alicia, Imelda, and Isabel*

Sessions:

Writing an ISP or Internship Proposal

Meetings with Academic Director and/or ISP Advisor or Internship Supervisor

Peer review of ISP or Internship Proposal Drafts

Writing the HSR Application

ISP or Internship Proposal Presentation to Peers and Roundtable Discussion

After completing Modules 1-4, students will split into groups by ISP an Internship. ISP students will take Module 5a, and Internship students will take Module 5b.

Module 5a: ISP in the Context of Mexico

This module prepares the student for the ISP experience. It examines work-based norms and practices related to conducting research in Mexico. The module highlights the importance of applied methodology in the ISP experience and the expectations and responsibilities of the student.

Required Readings:

Bell, Judith. (2010). Planning the Project. In *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-time Researchers in Education, Health and Social Science (5th ed.)*. Berkshire England: Open University Press.

Session: Preparing for the ISP

This introductory session prepares the student for the ISP. The session covers a range of areas that include how to approach and develop rapport with research participants, how to work collaboratively with the ISP advisor, and logistics of the ISP period, including travel, materials, and timelines. Students will also review the ISP assessment rubric.

Session: Work-based Norms and Practices in Mexico

This session explores work-based norms and practices related to research in Mexico, exploring such issues as how best to describe the ISP to potential research participants and others, gender norms, issues of language, and expectations for behavior while conducting research.

Session: ISP Applied Methodology

This session covers strategies of time management, networking strategies, and problem-solving research challenges.

Module 5b: Internship in the Context of Mexico

This module prepares the student for the internship experience. It examines work-based norms and practices related to internships in Mexico. The module highlights the importance of ethics in the internship experience and the expectations and responsibilities of the student, the host institution, and the program.

Required Readings:

Switzer, Frederick and King, Mary (2013) *The Successful Internship: Personal, Professional and Civic development in Experiential Learning (4th Edition)*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole (chapters 2 and 3)

McDonald, Francis (2011) Ethical Use of Interns. Retrieved from:

<http://www.prsa.org/aboutprsa/ethics/ethicalstandardsadvisories/documents/psa-17.pdf>

Session: Preparing for the Internship

This introductory session prepares the students for their internship in country. The session covers a range of areas that include résumé preparation and cover letter, dress, student objectives for the internship, and stages of student growth in the internship. Students will review the internship rubric.

Session: Work-based Norms and Practices in Mexico

This session explores work-based norms and practices related to internships and work in Mexico, exploring such issues as how best to describe the internship experience and purpose to potential internship hosts and others, gender norms, issues of language, and workplace expectations.

Session: The Ethics of Participating in an Internship in Mexico

This session outlines the responsibilities of the student and the host organization for a productive and significant experience that can serve the objectives of both. The session also reviews best practices for a successful internship and exposes the student's positionality in relation to the organization.

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Description of Assignments:

Assignment I: Practice Interview

Students are asked to conduct a practice interview with one of the members of their host family. They are asked to write a small reflection (2-3 pages) about their role and attitude towards their research subjects and the skills they brought to the interview to establish an ethical and safe environment for the interviewee. Students are also encouraged to explore how their own positionality along the lines of gender, sexuality, race, and class affected the set-up and wording of their questionnaire and consequently the outcome of the interview.

Assignment II: Cultural Patterns Journaling

Students are asked to engage in qualitative methodology (focused observation, intercultural dialogue and interviews, participant observation) as they attempt to identify the values, principles, and beliefs that sustain cultural patterns. They are expected to analyze the variables of such patterns according to ethnicity, class, gender, and age. The skills developed in this assignment aim to prepare students to carry out their Independent Study Project with high ethical considerations.

Work Journal

Students are expected to keep a work journal (this can be the same as their Cultural Patterns Journal) where they will document thoroughly all the activities and assignments carried out during the course as well as their observations and reflections. This will also continue during the Independent Study Project or the internship period. The work journal is submitted for review and evaluation twice during the course of the semester.

Research/Internship Proposal

All students must develop a research or internship proposal. The research proposal should address a theme related to the program, include research question and objectives, theoretical framework, methodology, and comply with the ethical standards learned throughout the course.

The internship proposal should include the objectives to be achieved during the internship period, a justification of the work and the organization selected, skills or areas in which the student can contribute to the work of the host organization, and an outline of the work plan to be carried out.

Participation

All students are expected to prepare for classes, attend and participate in all lectures, class discussions, field activities, and carry out all assignments and other activities prepared in the context of the Research Methods and Ethics course.

Assessment:

Practice Interview	20%
Cultural Patterns	20%
Work Journal	20%
Research/Internship Proposal	30%
Participation	10%

Grading Scale:

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64%	F

Expectations and Policies

- Show up prepared. Be on time. Have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done according to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).

- Respect differences of opinion (those of classmates, lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits, etc.). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

Student research (Independent Study Project) is a product of field work and as such students have an obligation to assess both the positive and negative consequences of their field study. Ethical field work, as stipulated in the SIT Statement of Ethics, results in products that are shared with local and academic communities; therefore copies of ISPs are returned to the sponsoring institutions and the host communities, at the discretion of the institution(s) and/or community involved. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad may archive, copy, or convert the ISP for non-commercial use, for preservation purposes, and to ensure future accessibility. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad may archive ISPs in the permanent collection at the SIT Study Abroad local country program office and/or at any World Learning office. World Learning/SIT Study Abroad has a non-exclusive, perpetual right to store and make available, including electronic online open access, to the ISP. Students retain all ownership rights of the ISP product and retain the right to use all, or part, of my project in future works. Please refer to the Student Handbook or the Access, Use, and Publication of ISP form.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.